



RWJ Foundation grant launches ambitious 18-month initiative

Rowan University is launching an ambitious plan to transform health care delivery with support from a \$3.05 million grant from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) (RWJF). Through new education and research programs, the 18-month project will develop innovative approaches that respond to the region's emerging needs for access to affordable and effective health care services.

"The project objectives are ambitious and our expectations are high," said Rowan University President Dr. Ali Houshmand. "But the need exists for research and education programs that will develop robust, innovative and practical health care delivery services to benefit South Jersey and serve as national models. As a public research university, Rowan is committed to pioneering efforts to solve the vexing challenges of ensuring access to high quality education and health care for New Jersey's citizens. RWJF's support will help us to transform our ambitions into tangible results."

RWJF, headquartered in Princeton, is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. The Foundation's grant to Rowan underscores the University's ever-expanding impact throughout South Jersey and the region. Rowan's recent designation as a comprehensive public research university and the addition of its two medical schools -- [Cooper Medical School of Rowan University](#) and the [Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine](#) -- have uniquely positioned the institution to address the future of academic medical education and health care delivery.

"With two medical schools and a [Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences](#), Rowan is South Jersey's center for scholarship and discovery in health care and life sciences," said Dr. Ken Blank, senior vice president for Health Sciences at Rowan and co-principal investigator for the project. "This grant, along with the research expertise from across our campuses, gives us a unique opportunity to develop practical solutions that can be implemented in the communities we serve."

"We are pleased to support Rowan University's strategic plan to strengthen the health care workforce and improve the quality of health care services to benefit Southern New Jersey," explained Robert Wood Johnson Foundation President and CEO Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey. "This grant is consistent with our commitment to support the educational, health, and health care institutions vital to the economy and the health and well-being of New Jersey, its residents, and its most vulnerable populations."

The project activities will focus on the following key areas:

- Identifying emerging areas of health care delivery research
- Exploring future trends in academic medical education to better prepare future physicians
- Promoting research partnerships among scholars and practitioners in medicine, psychology, sociology, life and physical sciences, epidemiology, informatics, bioethics, and other disciplines
- Creating a culture of innovation leading to practical applications that are scalable and transferable

"One of the most exciting initiatives involves seed funds for collaborative 'incubator teams' of faculty from across the University's multiple campuses," noted Dr. Roberta Harvey, vice president for Academic Affairs and a co-principal investigator of the project. "Seed funds will be awarded to interdisciplinary teams to develop projects that will attract external funding. In addition, the grant includes funds for competitive start-up packages to recruit faculty who will lead pioneering research programs at Rowan."

Rowan also will seek to connect its initiatives with established projects at institutions throughout the region. These strategic partnerships along with outreach to government offices and community organizations will help Rowan reach its goals of enhancing the health care workforce and improving the quality of health care services.

"The support from one of the nation's most prestigious foundations will allow us to pursue effective solutions for issues faced by our region and beyond," said Blank. "We are thrilled to have the opportunity to develop the academic medical education and health care research programs to address these challenges."

Rowan is experiencing unprecedented growth that supports its ability to meet the concerns posed by the expansion of health care under newly implemented federal legislation. The Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, which opened in 2012,

has spearheaded innovative approaches to academic medical education that emphasize access to underserved populations. Legislation enacted last year integrated the School of Osteopathic Medicine into Rowan, bringing with it the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and a rich legacy of research and a history of providing primary care physicians for New Jersey.